

1 Introduction

Anti-museum – imagining the unthinkable

This book opens up a new line of enquiry into a leading edge of experimentation and innovation in museum design and practice that was championed by anti-museums. As the name suggests, anti-museums deliberately opposed and reversed the founding principles and aims of what Bennett (1995) calls ‘the modern museum’, and, in most cases they are anti-museums of art. The book will establish their origins, what they do and why, what they have in common (and yet why they are also so diverse), and what impact they have had on visitation, museology and the development of art and art publics.

These ‘outsider institutions’ have been steadily growing in number and reputation since the 1940s, though such are the myriad ways in which convention can be opposed that they never formed a stable binary opposite, or a ‘successor to’, the modern museum in any formal, or collective sense. Nor did they wish to, standardisation was one of the things they opposed. Certainly, no attempt was made to form a new museological movement or art movement. Their strength is expressed instead through their individuality, through their flexibility and capacity to respond intimately to the art worlds around them – which are always particular and ecological (if not exclusively ‘local’) – and through a studied avoidance of collective manifestos, credos, directives or external control. They were almost all experimental, artist-, rather than art history-focussed and interested in developing active new roles in the production and development of art, in its curation and exhibition and more appropriate forms of dissemination to wider audiences. They had pedagogical ambitions but avoided didacticism. After a consideration of their conceptual and historical evolution in this chapter, the book will focus on six detailed case studies of anti-museums in the USA, Europe and Australia.

To many people, the idea of opposing museums, let alone building anything called an anti-museum, might seem absurd: such is the respect accorded them as centres of learning, and such is the fondness with which

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they are recalled from childhood visits and pleasurable associations with leisure, holidays and tourism. Art museums and galleries are treasured pillars of modern civilisation; they are woven into the fabric of contemporary life and we are currently in the middle of a renewed museum building phase globally. Much hope is pinned to their capacity to catalyse cultural and economic regeneration and most, if not all, of this growth is in the conventional public museum sector. It is true they are loved, but they are loved most by a minority dominated by sections of the educated elite. Indifference or ambivalence to them is prevalent in other social groups (Prior 2002; Green 2018; Franklin and Papastergiadis 2017).

It is rare to find more than a quarter of the adult population in any nation having visited an art museum in the previous 12 months. While rates for children are higher, at around 40 per cent, this is largely the result of art museum-going in school curricula. Art museum-going as a life-long pursuit, however, is largely confined to sections of the tertiary educated middle classes, and given that art museums were widely founded in the nineteenth century precisely to encourage *everyone* to enjoy the benefits of art, and not just the social elite (who collected art and displayed it in their homes), the modern art museum project might be judged a failure on its own terms. These were among the reasons why art critic John Berger was very far from impressed by them. In 1969, he also wrote that art museums were ‘inadequate and outdated’; their curators were ‘patronising, snobbish and lazy’. Further, Berger fumed about a view, common within art museum circles, that the pleasure of art derived from ‘well-formed taste’ and that ‘appreciation’ derived from ‘connoisseurship’. For Berger, both views were ‘mired in eighteenth century thinking’, just as their treatment of the working class as ‘passive [and] made to feel like paupers receiving charity and instruction’, belonged to the nineteenth century (Berger 2018, pp. 171–172; see also Leahy 2010, pp. 162–163).

Views such as these were common enough around the mid-twentieth century, and they prompted a new wave of frustration with the conventional art museum, that emerged especially within the contemporary art movements of the 1950s and 1960s. These were aided and abetted by the alternative society movements, civil rights and liberation politics of the post-war period. Under the pressure to rebuild, democratise and modernise, there were renewed calls for art to be more diverse, contemporary and future-facing. The Institute of Contemporary Arts in London, founded in 1947, was a path-breaker in this respect. While it deliberately decided not to be a museum, it went further than this by organising its programme in ways that actively opposed the culture of art museums. Critical reviews of its early years jubilantly described it as an anti-museum (e.g. Cranfield 2014). Also from the late 1940s, a circle of Paris-based artists around Jean Dubuffet became



Figure 1.1 Heinrich Anton Müller, untitled, 1925–1927

Source: Courtesy Collection de l'Art Brut, Lausanne

disaffected with the art world and the art museum at its centre, arguing that it encouraged a narrow and repetitive elite of 'anointed' artists and ignored other, more creative artists from being recognised or seen.

They began to collect art produced outside the canon and experimented with alternative spaces that *would* show it. In America, as we shall see, anti-museum thinking was also deeply entrenched and gave rise to a proliferation of other forms. By the 1970s these initial impulses began to drive many artists, alongside similarly disaffected curator and collector allies, to find various ways of opposing conventional museology within, as well as beyond a museum building of some kind.

These are the main subject of this book.

Anti-museums were not the only museological change in the second half of the twentieth century. Change accelerated through the 1970s and

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1980s when new forms of visitor experience and curatorial practice emerged within the conventional public museum sector in response to new demands to widen attendance, improve engagement, adopt new technologies and commercialise. In the emerging heritage museums, there was a shift away from the dominant culture's view of history to one shaped by popular culture, oral history, labour history and the everyday. Through negotiation with culturally diverse groups, the heritage museum became a less mediated experience and a more democratic space, converging with, rather than standing apart from, the communities they served (Witcomb 2003; Macdonald 2008). As a result, they thrived and their museum publics expanded. The same cannot be said for art museums.

For Radywyl et al. (2011), the 'new museology' produced little change beyond 'heightened participation' in most public art museums, and for the most part they remained steadfastly attached to a conventional curatorial offer, structured around academic art history and an improving stance/emphasis on 'educative leisure' (Prior 2002; Hanquinet & Savage 2012; Green 2018). In a period characterised by the rise and rise of contemporary art, this inevitably produced a tension with living artists, for whom the art history of their work was a lot less relevant than its subject matter and its intended social *impact*. Many prominent contemporary artists wanted to raise consciousness and effect social and political change through their work, yet frustratingly, the quietened, reverential gallery spaces and art historical emphasis side tracked visitors into anthology, taxonomy and chronology (Collings 2001; Judd 2016; Green 2018). Fine and important for researchers of art history, but were museums founded primarily for art history research or for the formation of broader art publics? The answer may be both, but arguably only the former thrived in the modern art museum.

Initially, a growing army of young, less prominent contemporary and outsider artists were ignored and left unseen by mainstream art museums. Living artists whether recognised or not, could not be ignored or wrapped up in history in the same way that dead artists had been, and they began to frame new types of alliances with a new generation of activist curators and collectors who often shared their frustrations. The ICA in London was founded by a group of intellectuals, artists and collectors (Cranfield 2008) and they were going to forge something other than an art museum in the conventional sense: 'an adult play centre, a workshop where work is a joy, a source of vitality and daring experiment' (Cranfield 2014). Anti-museums were typically founded by new mixes of enthusiast, including amateur collectors in league with artists.

What is an anti-museum?

How then, can a museum be both a museum and against museums? It seems impossible until it is appreciated how the modern museum has largely conformed to a very narrow set of aims, conventions and exhibitionary strategies, and that the aims of most anti-museums are often deliberately and diametrically opposed to them in some, or several, important respects (Berger 2018; Green 2018; Collings 2001). The anti-museum concept begins to make sense when one appreciates that modern museums came into being in the first place as an ‘approved’ and improving form of educative leisure, and as a form of cultural governance and politics at a time in the nineteenth century when northern Europe’s lively and ubiquitous popular culture was being marginalised, discouraged, legislated against, emasculated or banished (Storch 1982; Reid 1982; Dauntton 1983; Thompson 1992; Bennett 1995). Carnival had been popular in every village and town across Europe, but its enthusiastic patronage by the aristocracy waned after the French Revolution and their new-found fear of large crowds on city streets. Carnival was left exposed to the rising power of its long-time opponents, the protestant industrialists. In the remarkably short period between 1830 and 1900, carnival was banished almost everywhere, except southern Europe. Just how embedded and extensive art was in the popular cultural realm of carnival before then can be immediately grasped by the profoundly musical nature of London’s streets in the mid-nineteenth century (Simpson 2015), by the depth of visual art, theatricality and comedy in carnival and by the constant reworking of traditional forms of expression addressed to contemporary political issues (Brewer 1979; Bristol 1983; Bruner 2005), all of it taking place in the public realm, and much of it constituting what Adorno (1999) meant by a public sphere. For Bakhtin (1984), here was the ‘borderline between art and life’, and it was produced by a community as a whole, mostly as free expression by individuals and local organisations.

In place of what protestant leaders considered the morally dubious, alcohol fuelled and wild antics of carnival – a period of festivities that reigned across a ‘festive half-year’, from Christmas to midsummer – a new raft of sober-minded, improving leisures were funded and built by Protestant captains of industry, and high on their list was the founding of museums, libraries and art galleries (Roud 2008; Collinson 2016; Franklin 2019). The link between the community and its expressive voice in art was thereby lost in the modern museum. Only the art by recognised and ‘approved’ academic artists was exhibited and only exceptionally would local artists be included; it was collected, curated and exhibited in order to narrate a linear and representative history tracing a developmental path of

gradual improvement to the present day, in ways that validated the present and incumbent power; and its purpose was to impart an understanding of the individual artists as they were formed by, and contributed to this historical narrative of ‘progress’ (Bennett 1995). Chronology, taxonomy and didacticism were among its key organising principles and art history was the object of instruction and main purpose of the museum, apart from collection and conservation. The modern art gallery avoided the subjects of art and rendered less vibrant (or urgent) the expectation that art would explore how we might live better lives (Martin 2013; Adorno 1999; O’Connor 2010). As we have seen, almost all of its characteristics, and certainly its aims, have come in for significant criticism over a long period, especially from the artists, curators and collectors in the contemporary art period, so that the wonder is not that there are anti-museums, but why there are so few. The origins and history of these objections are described in the next section.

Origins

The anti-museum concept was conceived and in circulation from around the late eighteenth century. Initially, critics such as Quatremère de Quincy aimed to liberate the objects and artworks from the museum-as-mausoleum – from the way it disconnected them from their origins, contexts and their social life beyond the museum walls (Sherman 1994). At a later point, other critics wished to liberate those *subject* to its discipline, agency and authority (Maleuvre 1999), especially from the way museum collections were used as forms of memory to divine value, direct, and govern. This criticism focussed variously on the museum as a source of redemptive memory and refuge that stunted progress, or as a place of authoritative retrieval for the modern West’s mythic/egoistic sense of its origins and superiority, or, as its privileged medium for reflection on the human condition (Maleuvre 1999; Butler 2016; Cleary 2006). As such, the anti-museum was proposed as an alternative to both the historic Alexandrina museum paradigm as well as the modern museum itself (Butler 2016; Sherman 1994).

The anti-museum thesis was advanced most radically as a critique of the exhibition of art in museums, as it gathered together concerns, from Quatremère de Quincy to Nietzsche, about the way art objects were thereby disconnected from contexts that give them meaning; from the complex relationships that art works always sustain with life outside the museum (which for some is their destiny), and from their potential for transformative, emotional energy and excitement (Sherman 1994; Huyssen 1986, p. 173). For the Futurists, an early twentieth century art movement

with beginnings in Italy, museums were less a valued repository/resource of history than a distraction from the making of history. These were not minor quibbles. The anti-museum critique was vociferously opposed to museums as significant and momentous institutions of power and domination that negates rather than propagates art. They were to be burned and replaced by exhibitionary platforms (especially theatre and performance) where art might be reunited with life, a view recognising that the birth of the modern museum was directly connected with the killing of carnival and the West's rich popular culture (Bennett 1995; Bakhtin 1984; Marinetti 1909, pp. 189–190).

For some, the term anti-museum is an ill-defined genealogy of entities, variously considered ambiguous, contradictory or impossible to realise. Indeed, as Michaela Giebelhausen (2003) has shown, there are examples of the anti-museum thesis succeeding in the deliberate *refusal* to build national museums, a case in point being Brasilia which was subject to a thoroughgoing modernist design process. So, the anti-museum also has a life as an absence, and this is emphasised by a number of protest installations over the years from the USA to Germany and Japan (see Copeland & Balthazar 2017 for a compendium of examples), many taking the form of a permanently locked gallery.

More commonly, anti-museum sentiments were acted on by artists and took the form of new exhibitionary platforms, in new spaces and with new narratives (Lorente 2011; Smith 2012). Western contemporary artists had long been sources of criticism of public art museums, many setting up their own not-for-profit artspace in conjunction with alternative/independent curators and private foundations such as Dia Foundation in the USA.

The modern museum's emphasis on art history was singularly problematic for the deadening, temporally dissociating exhibition of contemporary art, and many artists felt that their work was not best served by the contemplative, reverential, art historical and corporate cultures of the modern art gallery (as pioneered by MoMA [the Museum of Modern Art, New York] – especially in its ubiquitous white cube style of exhibition where any distractions from the art itself, emotional and otherwise, were removed or discouraged (Duncan & Wallach 1978; Lorente 2011; Maak et al. 2011). Characteristically, contemporary artists want to stimulate strong emotional responses from their publics and to focus attention on the subjects and social/political objects of their art, and thus they grew increasingly frustrated. Such sentiments prompted a move from reason/instruction to emotions/experience, especially in the not-for-profit art spaces and foundations they created (Foster 2015; Krauss 1990; Serota 2000; Smith 2012).

Activism

In the late 1960s, Donald Judd and others developed forms of ‘anti-curation’ and ‘anti-museum’. For example, they moved single-artist sculptural exhibitions into spaces where the subjects of their art and its political and emotional impacts might be heightened (Goldberg 1980, p. 369; Lorente 2011). Judd himself moved away from the cultural centre and precinct to a high desert location at Marfa, Texas, the required journey purposely adding aspects of pilgrimage into the experience (see also Barush 2016). Others used theatrical devices, musical platforms or nightclub metaphors (e.g. PS1, New York). Judd never gave up his total opposition to the modern art museum, even during the period of ‘New Museology’. In 1992, he gave us this: ‘Almost all of the museums of Europe and America of the last decade are offensive’ (Judd 2016, p. 785). His Chinati Foundation and Judd Foundation at Marfa are dedicated to a thoroughgoing reversal of conventional museum values, governance, aspirations and social/political orientations. It is a great favourite among artists and the travelling art public willing to set out for the middle of nowhere, but paradoxically few others have had the courage or resources to emulate it. As Thomas Kellein (2010, p. 8) wrote in the forward to *Chianti: The Vision of Donald Judd*, ‘The values embodied in Judd’s vision of his ideal art museum are enthusiastically embraced by many in the art world today, but they are far from prevalent ...’.

Through the 1970s, anti-museums aimed to transform the role of art in society, refocus on the subjects and subjectivities of art, support artists themselves, revolutionise how art was exhibited and expand how art might be experienced and engaged with. There was a *lot* wrong with MoMA seemingly, and the critique ranged across aesthetic, historical, cultural, political, economic and social dimensions. Its apotheosis was felt most in the excitable, world-changing gestation of the Centre Pompidou, Paris, a cultural monument to the events of May 1968. The Pompidou Centre was to be a very ‘new type of museum which would be entertaining, accessible, impermanent, free, anti-elitist, devoted equally to design as to fine art, to books and film and street theatre ...’ (Roberts 1997, p. 96; see also Duncan & Wallach 1978 and Saumarez Smith 1995). It kept up the ante, but only for a while. Eventually the same form of Presidential project that funded and cut through the conventional/conservative Parisian art establishment became the route by which it returned to the fold. It was not going to be the only time that global art world convention would contain, neutralise, co-opt or ‘give canonic value to the those very things that set out to destroy the canon’ (Roberts 1997, p. 97).

The anti-museums featured in this volume successfully attempted to break down the cultural politics and civilising mission of the modern

museum, which, in the twentieth century development of MoMA, had become a conservative, politically controlled voice of corporate America. The capacity of artists and art to excite, incite, challenge and transform were tranquilised in its silent and bleached white interiors. This was art as political asylum/exile. It was challenged increasingly and experimentally. Some realised that to succeed they needed to detach themselves from governments and government sources of funding. Museums are very expensive. This is why there are so few anti-museums and why those that succeeded have something extraordinary about them: they have very resourceful, charismatic and courageous individuals at their centre.

Contemporary

The yBas group (young British artists) took to curating and exhibiting their own shows in the wake of the near total collapse of the London gallery sector in 1990, mostly outside conventional art museum aims and formats (Stallybrass 2006). Prior to the dramatic expansion and growth of contemporary art after 2000, alternative non-didactic exhibitionary and collecting cultures for contemporary art became a built-in element for much art practice. It was the eventual florescence of contemporary art after 2000 and its shift from being a marginal, esoteric and self-referential genre to being mainstream popular culture, that offered the possibility for these exhibitionary models to become normative and realised in a number of new forms and, especially scales. Out of this, some would raise the anti-museum flag once more.

Anti-museum formats and the thinking behind them also emerged from a time of crisis in the art world. In the mid-2000s art critics issued gloomy prognoses on the future of what they call 'institutional critique', when all art appeared to be implicated and fatally compromised through its co-option by art world institutions, its rampant commercialisation, its massive expansion on the back of windfalls from the global financial crisis and its growing dependency on a wealthy collecting elite. At first, the dramatic rise of contemporary art alongside austerity measures imposed on public art museums created a panic. As Fraser (2005) argued, 'there no longer is an outside' from which to mount a critique.

How, then, can we imagine, much less accomplish, a critique of art institutions when museum and market have grown into an all-encompassing apparatus of cultural reification? Now, when we need it most, institutional critique is dead, a victim of its success or failure, swallowed up by the institution it stood against.

(p. 279)

Far from being emasculated through institutionalisation, Fraser sensed a source of strength:

It's not a question of being against the institution: We are the institution. It's a question of what kind of institution we are, what kind of values we institutionalize, what forms of practice we reward, and what kinds of rewards we aspire to. Because the institution of art is internalized, embodied, and performed by individuals, these are the questions that institutional critique demands we ask, above all, of ourselves.

(p. 280)

Better late than never.

Art museum developments since then increasingly took the form of artists, curators, collectors and institutions taking up this pragmatic stance for reinvention (Smith 2012; Hanquinet & Savage 2012; Franklin & Papastergiadis 2017), and over the past ten years we have seen an expanded version of the 'exhibitionary complex' emerge, often developing alternative, fringe or festive models (Bennett 1988; Smith 2012).

Ironically, significant contemporary artists and their galleries began to adopt *these* models as public art museums became unable to provide the necessary public exposure necessary to maintain their reputations. The dramatic rise in contemporary art prices, combined with budgetary cuts in the public art museum sector, meant that the latter could no longer sustain previous collecting levels (Franklin 2020). Instead, contemporary artists turned to exchanging their best works for exposure in a new generation of private/independent museums and art spaces that were more artist-focussed (see Heckmüller 2011). These artists gained exhibitionary and curatorial collaborations they had never had before, and collectors gained creative and expressive roles beyond the silent partner provisions of the Getty era (Franklin and Papastergiadis 2017; Terry Smith (2009, 2012).

Contemporary art also began to be more distributed into everyday spaces of hotels, bars, shop windows and public spaces. Laurie Hanquinet and Mike Savage (2012, p. 52) found that new exhibitionary platforms generated new dispositions and new art publics with antipathy to conventional art museums: 'the more a museum presents itself as a traditional educational place, the more it will be criticised for its detachment from the spectators, the rest of society and from ordinary life'. More youthful and creative audiences preferred art museums with 'a "figural" sensitivity based on a visual immersion rather than a "discursive" sensitivity based on a priority of words over images, a rationalist view of culture and a distancing of the spectator from the cultural object' (ibid., p. 52).

Contemporary art since 2000 increasingly abandoned ‘art about art’ that had been popular with conventional art museums, in favour of art relevant to pressing issues of their times. Hal Foster (2015) identified five themes of the new contemporary art: the abject, the precarious, the traumatic, the archival and the lost. These symptomatic objects of what he called (after Brecht) the ‘bad new days’ of neoliberal ascendancy are often addressed through the carnivalesque techniques of ‘mimetic exacerbation’ and ‘mockery’ that reach directly to knowing popular audiences through their own bodies. Against the grain, Foster tells us that ‘the avant-garde is alive and well’. Not attempting the transgression of a given order or the legislation of a new one, the avant-garde that interests him now is ‘immanent in a caustic way’: ‘it seeks to trace fractures that already exist within the given order, to pressure them further, to activate them somehow’ (p. 284).

Beyond the cultural precinct

The spatial periphery, former industrial zones and other spaces on the social margin became a new ecological niche for anti-museums. Requiring out-of-the-way touristic journeys, separation from the everyday and demanding significant commitments of time, these locations are often chosen to foster receptivity to new ideas and enhance more sensual encounters with art (Franklin 2014; Smith 2009).

David Walsh’s Mona combined both extremes: a remote, former convict island and a rustbelt industrial area in the island state of Tasmania, Australia. The success he has had attracting people from across Australia, and internationally, to make a journey specifically to Mona raises the prospect of pilgrimage-like journeys, where, like the Grand Tour before it, the experience of art is conjoined with personal quests for redemption, release, play and adventure (McCarthy 2018). In 2011, *The Sunday Times* announced that, ‘Mona is the most exciting addition to the Australian cultural landscape since the Sydney Opera House’ (Parris 2011). On the back of this and other accolades, Lonely Planet ranked Hobart the seventh best city in the world to visit in 2013 and Mona the best art gallery in 2015.

The Museum of Everything is a travelling concept, taking the works by ‘unintentional, untrained and undiscovered’ artists into new kinds of spaces such as Selfridges’ famous shop windows on Oxford Street, or the Chalet Society, Paris, a Catholic seminary-turned-exhibition space located in Saint-Germain (Snell 2017). Banksy also now travels collections of his works into anti-museum installations such as Dismaland, in the down-on-its-luck seaside town of Western-super-Mare, UK; or the more permanent (real) colonial themed *Walled Off Hotel*, Bethlehem, a hotel that boasts the worst hotel view in the world – a lookout over the barrier wall separating

Israeli and the Palestinian territories, with glimpses of Israeli army watch towers.

Anti-museums readily breach their own museum walls. La Collection de l'Art Brut stages outdoor exhibition in its own park; PS1 has brought music and a club atmosphere into its former playground spaces; Art42 has taken its art across France and now has an exhibition mooring on the Seine. Mona is perhaps the exemplar museum for taking its anti-museology beyond the museum walls. Its estate grounds at Moorilla are an active and important space where music, food and art are combined in new ways, around a major soundstage; around a weekend market format; at every opening (when, Great Gatsby-like, the entire city is invited rather than just the good and the great); at dusk/night around their major James Turrell *Amarna* 2015 installation; and as one of their festival venues. Across the Cities of Hobart and Glenorchy and into the hinterlands, their festivals, Mona Foma and Dark Mofo, extend their penetration and engagement into churches and chapels, beaches, underground cellars, industrial dockside buildings, an abandoned psychiatric hospital, theatres, churches, a reused 1950s cinema, back streets, public market areas and sacred war memorial grounds. In 2018, 418,963 travelled to see Dark Mofo, which compares with Glastonbury's 2016 attendance of 177,000 and the Edinburgh Festival's 2016 attendance of 450,000 (McKay and Webster 2016). The extent of collaboration and engagement across the city has been infectious. Government and business buildings are lit red during Dark Mofo and an impromptu/pop-up fringe builds steadily, alongside the progressive abandonment of city and street regulations that prevented/controlled free expression in the city since the nineteenth century. This rendering of the art museum into everyday space is significant, inclusive and critical. As Cranfield (2014) observed in relation to other such initiatives:

For an institution that has frequently been associated with temperance and reserve, the less-than-sober excess of the museum, spilling out of its frame onto the streets and across time and space, threatens the stability of the institutional form that aims at hermetic separation from the contingency of the everyday.

Mona was announced as an anti-museum, designed as an anti-museum, and has offered a road-testing of the idea of an anti-museum as a viable mainstream museum format that was not so easily corrupted as the Centre Pompidou. Being a private venture, owned by one man, meant that conventional political and governmental pressures were eliminated, while not preventing co-funding and other partnerships with governments and governmental organisations at every level.

Darkness

Anti-museums have a tendency to avoid light, as much as they avoid seeking only to enlighten. Nightclubs were a bigger influence on PS1's founder Alanna Heiss than other museums and for many years PS1 was the only non-profit member of the New York Nightlife Association (Miller 2016). Mona and some of its imitators (e.g. the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery; Prada Milan) have gone underground or turned off the emotionally neutral light of the white cube. Theirs is a more mysterious gloaming or twilight catacomb. They also turn up the sound and include more music and smell. They seek to transform and enliven rather than instruct. They want people to be lost rather than saved. They appeal to non-art audiences who connect to them via music, popular culture, fashion and politics, as well as art scene types bored of traipsing around museum spaces designed to exact quietude and reverence. Perhaps the most radical of the anti-museums was a form of exhibition created for 'l'art brut', first in 1940s Paris and later in Lausanne, Switzerland, in the 1970s. Art brut was first championed by Jean Dubuffet who defined it as

anything produced by people unbesmirched by artistic culture, in which mimicry, contrary to what occurs with intellectuals, has little or no part. So that the makers (in regard to subjects, choice of materials employed, means of transposition, rhythms, ways of writing, etc.) draw entirely on their own resources rather than on the stereotypes of classical or fashionable art.

(Dubuffet 1949, p. 8)

Here, darkness was a key trope – in two senses. Originally Dubuffet was attracted to the art of inmates of mental hospitals, prisons and orphanages, and his first exhibitions, under the guise of *Le Foyer de l'Art Brut* (1947), in the basement of the Galerie Drouin in Paris, were held in secret. The works were hung in a detached manner, to heighten their sense of displacement, repulsion and exile (Thévoz 1975), though it was only when his collection found its final home at the Château de Beaulieu in Lausanne that he began using the term anti-museum (Rousseau 2010, p. 71). At Lausanne, the curator Michel Thévoz used black or darkened walls, which surprised and then delighted Dubuffet. It resonated with 'anti-culture', his other much favoured term, and a view that 'cultural art in its entirety appears to be the game of a futile society, a fallacious parade' (Merrick 2010).

As Dubuffet's collection expanded to elaborate the scope of 'outsider artists', he denounced the modern museum as 'morgues for embalming' or pompous 'citadels of official culture'. Art brut was less easy to assimilate back into the modern museum and the idea continues to drive significant

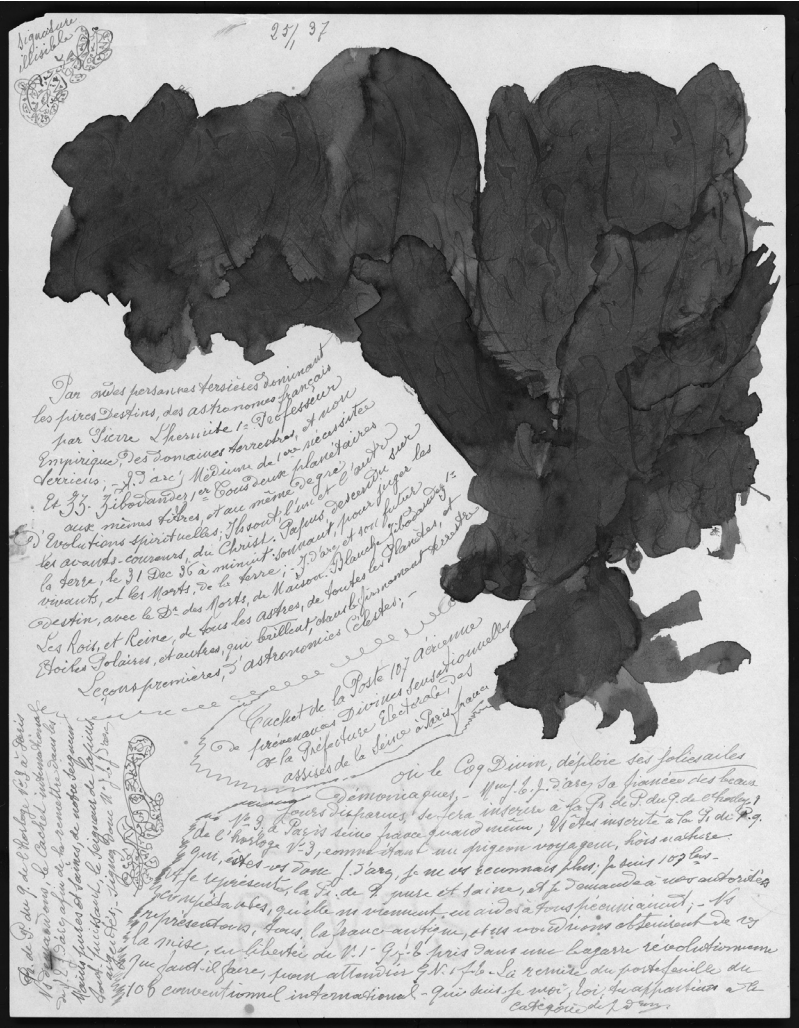


Figure 1.2 Jeanne Tripier, untitled, 25 January 1937

Source: Courtesy Collection de l'Art Brut, Lausanne

museological innovation such as James Brett's Museum of Everything (MoE).

Inspired by Art Brut, MoE extended such outsider art even further, not least for being a travelling exhibitionary format that pops up in random

special places around the world with great success. Here again, another individual collector, James Brett, likes to exhibit dark or dimly lit corners or rooms, the trope of modest home spaces being more favoured than gallery cubes. But Brett likes to surprise too and to place works by these artists in high status windows (literally) for irony and juxtaposition. In 2011, for example, MoE occupied spaces in one the world's most commercial temples of consumerism. At Selfridges, in Oxford St, *Exhibition #4* invaded its famous shop windows, its *Wonder Room* and its dimmer basement areas – attracting 100,000 people in a ten-week run (Museum of Everything 2011). Next to the most glamorous commercial brands in the world, displayed by the very best art-window dressers, it showed 'the first global survey of studios for self-taught artists with developmental disabilities' (Museum of Everything 2011, p. 11). Then, in 2017 it moved its considerable collection of outsider art/art brut to be the annual centrepiece exhibition at Mona, some 56 feet below ground (17 metres) in the murky depths of its catacombs. At Mona, design maven Adrian Spinks created something like Brett's childhood home inside their international touring exhibition space.

Humour and play

Anti-museums also tend to oppose conventional modern museums by avoiding the seriousness with which they present art and the serious atmosphere in which visitors are expected to engage with it. If theatre, opera, other live music and cinema audiences can be animated and emotional in their response to, and engagement with art, why must the viewing of painting or sculpture be done in such controlled emotional settings, with audiences hushed and physically undemonstrative (and saddled with learning aids)? Many anti-museums actively oppose the seriousness of conventional museums by injecting humour into the museum experience – frequently by including humorous works with serious objectives – but also in their museum's communications, aimed, directly or indirectly, at the art world, or even its own art. Bakhtin (1984) made the point that authority of all kinds is not only serious, it lacks a sense of humour. Mona takes this a stage further in the clowning antics of its museum owner, David Walsh and writer Elizabeth Pearce (Franklin 2014) and 'clowning' is to be found as much in their communications, digital platforms and social media sites as it is in their museum language, design and anti-catalogues (catalogues that are critical and satirical rather than boosterish).

For Bakhtin, seriousness was something that always rendered authority, and those who aspire to it, vulnerable to mockery and satire, creating a powerful space of critique and the possibility of a critical public sphere

that was always part of popular culture. A mocking stance to the seriousness of art was Mona's means of liberating it, but perhaps more importantly a means of reaching out to a wider public who, they felt were needlessly intimidated and alienated from it. Whereas art gallery catalogues are almost invariably talking up the importance of their works, in earnest, serious tones, we get the opposite in Mona catalogues. If it is not always mocking or satirical, it never misses opportunities to raise *doubt* with alternative voices as a counterpoint to art's self-assuredness. To ram home the point that they are not art establishment, the conventional art voice/art history is parodied at Mona by tactlessly labelling it 'artwank'. Art history is not dismissed, it has a say, but it is not given the final word. That is left up to a viewing public to work through from choices and an absence of direction. This level of trust in a viewing public is also a feature of the anti-museums featured in this book. We find humour prominent in our consideration of other anti-museums: at The New Museum, New York; in the street art of Art42, Paris; and in the content and presentation of outsider art at The Museum of Everything (London).

Monty Python's Flying Circus, a uniquely surreal ('Pythonesque') sketch show, made a point of targeting the idiosyncrasies/anachronisms of British professional culture and they lost no time in framing the art gallery – the 'Art Gallery sketch' appeared in their fourth episode, *Owl-Stretching Time*, first aired in the UK on 26 October 1969. Monty Python found the art gallery a perfect object of ridicule for satire and mockery. It featured two 'uneducated' working class housewives [played by men in drag], with young children in tow, discussing art with well-formed taste, appreciation and connoisseurship, interrupted only by one of their children who had developed a taste for fine art, by actually eating it. Those who never go to art galleries and do not understand art laugh the loudest when they see themselves represented as espousing the pompous language of expertise and taste while attempting to prevent their child from eating priceless artworks. I did. I was 13 in October in 1969, and knew nothing about art or the art world but I got the joke, or enough of it to realise it was poking fun at art museums; that 'art' was not part of my everyday world, but an esoteric world belonging to transcendent, remote experts. This humour is therefore inclusive, since, whether one was a gallery-goer or not, it is clear that the sketch pokes fun at an obscure and snobbish art world and the somewhat pitiful bids for social distinction it encourages. Monty Python's are not the only artists to deploy laughter against art. Citing Callum Storrie's *Delirious Museum* (2006), Ben Cranfield (2014) recounts how artists, from Dadaism to Surrealism used humour to critique the modern art museum:

The humorous and the playful were used to oppose the rigidity of culture exemplified by the hallowed spaces of the Louvre, most notably in Duchamp's defacement of a postcard of the Mona Lisa with the addition of a moustache and the letters L.H.O.O.Q. which, when read out loud in French, supposedly translates as 'she has a hot ass'.

Duchamp famously also staged the theft of the *Mona Lisa* from the Louvre.

Playfulness and play was deliberately inserted into the early and later content of the Institute for Contemporary Arts, London, in order to reconnect art to its original base in ritual, as an active, transformative, collective and pleasurable part of life. The modern museum tends to atomise emotionally neutralised individuals as well as hive playfulness off into separate museum areas for children, but anti-museums have reversed this in many cases (Cranfield 2013; Franklin & Sansom 2018).

Six case studies

In the remaining chapters a critical exploration of five anti-museum case studies is undertaken. The case studies span their early and mid-twentieth century beginnings in new art movements and counter-cultural politics and their continuing presence in new international settings for contemporary art. Each case study chapter will chart their background, aims, development and evolution in more detail. Each chapter documents what they do in the contemporary world, what they are against, and how they have innovated new solutions to old problems by reversing the orderings of the conventional modern museum. In each case, it is shown how they engage their publics in new ways, within and beyond the museum walls; and how they respond to the particularities of the changing world around them.

Each chapter will evaluate the difference they have made to our engagement with art and assess the extent to which their presence, their success and their collaborations have impacted on the conventional art museum establishment – whether they have shifted taste, ethics, aesthetics, engagement, atmosphere and what counts as art.

It will also analyse how their operations fit into the cultural ecology of their locations and settings, and whether they can remain commercially viable, as well as philanthropically connected, to their traditional public partners. It will analyse their contribution to the life of their communities, the vibrancy of local arts and their value to the travelling art public – to traveling artists as well as art tourists. By showing the extent of their diversity and changes of approach, the book offers those looking beyond convention a wide range of inspiration and choice.

With a renewed emphasis on experimentation and fluidity, the tide has changed for the anti-museum. In the shape of The Chinati Foundation and Judd Foundation at Marfa, Texas; at PS1 and the New Museum in New York, at the Collection de l'Art Brut, Lausanne, Switzerland; at Art42 in Paris and at Mona in Tasmania, Australia, the anti-museum proves to be as resilient as it is variable.

By definition, the conventional modern museum has a remarkably predictable *form* and offers a largely standard experience. Many museums of art offer essentially similar collections too. The same cannot be said for anti-museums. They tend not to be located in the central places favoured by conventional museums; they tend not to follow the grandly authoritative statements of conventional architecture, they tend not to follow the same exhibitionary design strategies, language or display and they tend to have very specific types of collection. Each anti-museum reverses these conventions in unique ways. For these reasons, a first-person account of arriving into, and encountering each of the anti-museum case studies will be given. Readers will gain a sense of the areas they are in; how visitors are received; the architecture that houses them; the ambience inside the museum; the different ways of seeing art in them and how other visitors appear to engage with them.